Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and thirty-fifth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 January 2018, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha ..... (Sri Lanka)

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The President: I call to order the 1435th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. On my list of speakers for this afternoon running over from the morning session, I have the following delegations: France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Belarus, the Netherlands, Indonesia and Chile. If there are any delegations that I have not mentioned, please let the secretariat know. China, thank you. If there are any other requests as we go along, please pass them on to the secretariat. Our cut-off time today is 5 p.m., to allow time for the preparatory meetings for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Let me now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success in carrying out your duties. I would also like to welcome Ms. Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Her commitment to supporting the machinery of disarmament sends out an important signal, an invitation for all of us to assume our responsibilities.

France fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, to which I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity. Last year, my delegation noted with concern that the international security environment was tending to deteriorate. Far from easing up, this trend has intensified, as highlighted in the Strategic Review of Defence and National Security 2017 commissioned by the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, the day after his election. Published in December 2017, this important document is intended to set out the strategic framework for the development of the Military Planning Act for the period 2019–2025, in accordance with which the defence spending of France will rise to 2 per cent of gross domestic product by 2025.

The Strategic Review incorporates lessons learned from the emergence, since the publication of the 2013 White Paper on Defence, of a volatile and unpredictable strategic context marked by an enduringly high level of terrorist threat, simultaneous crises, the growing military assertiveness of established or emergent powers, the weakening of multilateral frameworks and increasingly fast-paced technological upheaval. In that context, the Strategic Review addresses the interests of France and its ambitions for its defence and the defence of Europe, which include international peace and security. On that basis, it identifies the most important capacities required by the French armed forces. I will not go into the details of this Review, which you can consult on our website, but I would like to draw attention to certain aspects of it.

The Review highlights the shift in the international system that emerged from the cold war, which is now giving way to a dramatically changing multipolar environment whose principal features are instability and unpredictability. A growing number of established or emergent powers in troubled regions are asserting their military strength while pursuing an approach of power politics or faits accomplis. This assertiveness is fuelling competition over access to resources and control of physical and virtual strategic areas, including oceans, airspace, outer space and cyberspace. In some cases, these developments are coupled with direct challenges to international institutions and norms intended to restrict the use of force and a worrying proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. These power strategies are supported by the development of new operating methods based on ambiguous intentions, and the use of military and non-military measures to intimidate or destabilize other entities, exacerbating the risks of escalation.

We must also deal with harsher conflicts and potentially better armed opponents. The growth of weapons stockpiles, the dissemination of modern conventional equipment and technological developments are enabling a growing number of State and non-State entities to acquire advanced military capabilities. Furthermore, capabilities that, until recently, were the exclusive preserve of States have been made broadly accessible by the dissemination of new civilian technologies. When combined with innovative courses of action, these developments cannot fail to have an impact on the technological and operational capacities of the armed forces in all settings, from land and sea to air and

cyberspace. Indeed, cyberspace is becoming an area of potential confrontation in its own right, as outer space may also be one day.

The technological breakthroughs that we are witnessing give rise to new opportunities, but also to new vulnerabilities. The accelerated pace of revolutionary technological changes in civilian practices has many potential military applications in artificial intelligence, robotics, systems networking and biotechnology. Advances in digital technologies are crucial to the functioning of our societies, including our States and armed forces. Cyberspace is now characterized by a multiplicity of public and private stakeholders, a weak legal framework and the difficulty that investigators face when trying to identify the perpetrators of attacks. It is also giving rise to new vulnerabilities that make digital sovereignty a priority issue.

The Strategic Review conducted in France calls on us, now more than ever, to respond to the many challenges of today with a sense of responsibility, realism and determination. It reminds us that only through coherent efforts to dissipate international tensions, ensure unwavering respect for international law and defend the need for dialogue and cooperation at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels can we ensure that our common objectives in the disarmament sphere are credible. Despite the difficulties, we must stand ready to tackle the numerous challenges awaiting us this year. France will actively play its part in that endeavour.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be held in 2018. As the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems has increased in recent months, it is our collective responsibility to protect and strengthen the non-proliferation regimes established by the major instruments in this field, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We will pay particularly close attention to the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which, in the last year, has stepped up its destabilizing provocations in flagrant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. In the face of such acts, it is our responsibility to reaffirm the inviolability of the rule of non-proliferation and to bring that State's regime to the negotiating table with a view to completely, verifiably and irreversibly denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. We must ensure that the review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty continues to attach the highest priority to addressing this crisis. France will also be paying close attention to the question of whether the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is fully implemented. Firmness and balance are required in order to continue addressing the various grounds for international concern over Iran, in particular those relating to Security Council resolution 2131 (2013).

France will play a particularly active role in promoting a pragmatic and progressive approach to nuclear disarmament that takes full account of the security context. For that reason, it is opposed to the treaty banning nuclear weapons that was hastily negotiated last year in complete disregard for the deteriorating strategic context and the role that nuclear deterrence continues to play in preserving security and international and regional stability, in particular in Europe and Asia. France did not participate in the negotiations over this instrument and does not intend to accede to it. This treaty is not binding on us and does not create new obligations.

As disarmament can be achieved only through practical measures and not by decree, we will continue to work with determination to implement the following priority steps towards nuclear disarmament: the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein; active participation, in this regard, in the high-level expert preparatory group on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, under the presidency of Canada; and work on the verification of nuclear disarmament, in the framework of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the group of governmental experts to be established this year under the presidency of Norway.

The use of chemical weapons with total impunity is also a matter of major concern for France. Since 2012, international inquiry mechanisms, the press and non-governmental organizations have reported on several hundred chemical attacks. Nearly 14,000 people have reportedly been exposed to toxic substances and several hundred killed. The repeated nature of such attacks, whether in Iraq, Syria or elsewhere in Asia, represents a serious challenge to the ban on chemical weapons. France does not accept that any entity should be able to challenge the most high-level non-proliferation regime without facing repercussions.

Today, therefore, the establishment of an international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons is being proposed. Representatives of a founding group of 29 States have gathered today in Paris to ratify a joint declaration of principles, which includes a series of commitments, and to participate in this partnership's inaugural conference, which is now open to all States that have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Biological weapons are another area of serious concern. The meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, which was held last December under the outstanding presidency of our Indian colleague, Ambassador Gill, overcame real difficulties to enjoy a successful outcome. France will do its utmost to ensure that efforts are made to build on that success.

In several respects, 2018 will be a very important year in the area of conventional weapons. In order to improve everyone's security, we must renew our determination to make progress on disarmament and to fight against the spread of conventional weapons. Every day, illicit arms trafficking, the unlawful spread of small arms and light weapons and the use of improvised explosive devices result in an increasing number of victims, including civilians. These weapons, whether they be in the hands of State or non-State entities, fuel terrorism and currently represent the main threat to societies and their security, stability and prosperity in an increasing number of countries.

Accordingly, France will do everything possible to ensure the success of the Third Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will take place next June under the presidency of France. We will make efforts to ensure that preparations for that important event are as substantial and tangible as they are transparent and inclusive. It is essential that we learn from the specific experiences and concerns that affect every region and country. I would also like to inform you that, yesterday, France circulated a series of documents that will provide the basis for new open-ended, informal consultations to be held on Monday, 29 January, at 3 p.m. in Room XXV of the Palais des Nations.

The international community, with the support of civil society, must step up its efforts to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and enhance the practical implementation and universalization of existing instruments. This is true of the Arms Trade Treaty, which will not fully achieve its goals until it becomes a truly global treaty that brings together exporting countries, importing countries and transit and transfer countries. In assuming the vice-presidency, France will help to achieve these goals, giving its full support to the Japanese presidency.

This is also true of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which has achieved positive results that must be consolidated. Discussions on the potential issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems, which began in 2013 on the initiative of France and were continued by Germany, should be consolidated in the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts on that subject, the second session of which will begin in April next year.

In the context of this Convention, work must also continue on the issue of improvised explosive devices, which claim too many victims every year. France will continue to provide all the impetus and expertise necessary for progress to be made in this area, including in the context of the responsibilities that it will exercise in 2018 in assuming

the presidency of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention.

Mr. President, you will have the difficult task of drawing up a programme of work for this forum in close collaboration with the other presidents of this session. I know that, when you undertake this complex exercise, you will spare no effort to extricate the Conference from the situation in which it has languished for far too long. In that endeavour, you may count on the full support and constructive spirit of the French delegation.

It is more urgent than ever that the Conference should re-establish a climate of trust and constructive dialogue, taking into account the developments and achievements of recent years. The substantive discussions undertaken as part of the schedule of activities running up to 2015, or in the framework of last year's working group on the way ahead, have made a useful contribution on which we must build in order to move forward this year. In order to move steadily and gradually towards consensus, it is essential that there should be greater continuity of effort between the successive presidents of the Conference. Greater effort should also be made to enable the Conference to remain fully apprised of, and involved in, the work undertaken in other disarmament forums, including groups of governmental experts. We must work to reconnect the various pillars of the disarmament machinery and strengthen the coherence of our actions in the interests of everyone. In that regard, you may count on the full support of the French delegation.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her statement and I now invite the representative of the United Kingdom to take the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you Mr. President. Let me congratulate you on the assumption of your role and assure you of my delegation's full support. Let me also join others in welcoming the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs back to Geneva and for her words this morning. Perhaps through you, Mr. President, I could request that the secretariat circulate the text of that statement to all those participating in the work of the Conference. Lastly, allow me to welcome those colleagues who are joining us today for the first time.

The defining purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations and to achieve international cooperation in solving problems. These values and the rules that they imbue are central to the national interest of the United Kingdom and underpin all our collective security and prosperity. Yet there is no doubt that today's global security environment poses challenges that test our values, our vision and our resolve to defend those very rules and standards.

A sixth nuclear test and the launching of 20 ballistic missiles, including 3 intercontinental ballistic missiles, clearly show that the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has gone beyond the Peninsula, beyond the region. It is now a very real threat to countries around the world. The regime has shown disdain and disregard for the international community with each test that it conducts to increase its capabilities, challenging global rules and norms.

These tests are accompanied by a fierce rhetoric that serves only to heighten tensions through the region and well beyond. It is now more important and pressing than ever before not only to maintain, but to increase the pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come to meaningful negotiations by diplomacy and the effective implementation of sanctions.

The Security Council has unanimously adopted 10 resolutions since the first nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2006. These resolutions have imposed increasingly stringent sanctions on the Republic in order to limit its ability to pursue its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. They also send a strong message to its leadership that the international community cannot accept its illegal programmes.

The United Nations measures now in place in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – its strictest sanctions in a generation – are vital for the reduction of the significant export revenues that the regime's leadership diverts from its people to fund its illegal programmes. The effects of these measures are increasingly being felt by the regime and we urge a change in course by the North Korean leadership. Most recently, we saw the

unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2397 (2017) in response to the Republic's launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile on 28 November 2017.

Upon adoption of this resolution, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom said that Kim Jong Un had the choice of two paths: to continue the current path of provocation and isolation or to put the well-being of the North Korean people first. The regime put the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its current path. But it is the North Korean people who will suffer because of the leadership's reckless decision to favour developing its illegal programmes over providing for its people. The real path to be taken has to be the one that leads towards the security and prosperity of the North Korean people. This can only begin with the regime engaging with the international community and abandoning its illegal programmes.

The nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are illegal and destabilizing, endangering peace and security both in the region and internationally. This only serves to increase tension and trepidation around the globe which the Republic's regime must be aware cannot be in its own interests, let alone those of the North Korean people. We must stand united and make it manifestly clear that we are fully prepared to take action to respond to the Republic's reckless pursuit of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. Each one of us has a part to play to use our influence to put the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a path towards a peaceful settlement.

Part of the challenge posed by today's global security environment lies in its increasing complexity. While we should be cognizant of this, we should not overlook the obvious. This brings me to two positive activities, one that will start this year and one that will come to a conclusion, but both of which, in their own way, are obvious matters on which we should focus our attention.

First, this year will see the start of a series of meetings of a group of governmental experts on nuclear disarmament verification. The United Kingdom has a long record of working on disarmament verification. We are pleased to have been among the initial co-sponsors of the resolution establishing this group put forward in 2016 by Norway – a non-nuclear-weapon State with which we have worked closely on this issue over the years. The importance of verification in both attaining and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons is obvious to all. This is something on which we all agree: not a single State opposed that resolution. The United Kingdom will support this work in 2018, starting in fact tomorrow, when we will co-host with Norway a conference in the United Kingdom to which all members of the group of governmental experts have been invited.

Second, this year will see the conclusion of the work, under the leadership of Canada, of a high-level expert preparatory group on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Whether cutting off the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons is seen as a step in itself or as part of a wider arrangement, it is obvious that, if we want to put a cap on the potential number of nuclear weapons that can be made, we will all have to agree that newly produced fissile material should be destined only for uses other than making nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom looks forward to the open-ended meeting in New York next month and to the final meeting of the expert group starting in May and will do what it can to ensure that the process makes steady progress.

The United Kingdom strongly believes in the importance of the women, peace and security agenda as a means of improving international security, preventing conflict and sustaining peace. The United Kingdom holds the pen on women, peace and security at the Security Council. We regularly fund projects on women, peace and security through our conflicts, stability and security fund; we are the second largest donor to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The United Kingdom was one of the first countries to develop a national action plan on women, peace and security in 2006 and, last week, we launched our fourth national action plan, which puts women and girls at the heart of the work of the United Kingdom in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The United Kingdom will continue to call for the increased representation of women at all decision-making levels, including in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. Locally, the delegation of the United Kingdom to the Conference

on Disarmament will continue in its informal efforts to foster engagement among the women in our community.

Lastly, on the topic of informal efforts to build our sense of community, I would like to reiterate our invitation to you all to the reception that we will be hosting this evening, at 6 p.m., in the delegates' restaurant on the eighth floor.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to congratulate you on your election to this post. On behalf of the Belarusian delegation, we wish you and all the presidents of the session every success for this session of the Conference.

I would also like to welcome the participation of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in our first meeting of this year's session.

Belarus is committed to restoring the viability of the Conference on Disarmament and revitalizing the work of this unique multilateral disarmament mechanism. We are of the view that, overall, the work carried out during the 2017 session by the Conference's working group on the way ahead had a positive effect on those processes. Thanks to those discussions, the members of the Conference were able to resume substantive consideration of the items on its agenda.

At the same time, however, we were unable to escape the vicious cycle that prevents us from adopting what is essentially a technical document – the programme of work.

We wish to thank the Secretariat for the materials circulated on proposals for the programme of work that have been formulated over the past 17 years. The compilation is very useful to member States. We are guided by the need to continue substantive work, which will allow us to breathe new life into our disarmament mechanism.

We believe that all the prerequisites are in place for an immediate start to the development of a comprehensive and legally binding agreement on the provision of unambiguous and unconditional security guarantees for non-nuclear States. The development and acceptance of such a legally binding document will significantly strengthen the non-proliferation regime established in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

There remain gaps in the legal regulation of the peaceful uses of outer space. We believe that their elimination would be facilitated by the adoption of an agreement on preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space, a good basis for which is provided by the joint Russian-Chinese proposal. We believe that practical steps towards filling these legal gaps should be carefully studied and supported by the international community. We hope that the Conference will be able to hold substantive discussions on these issues during the 2018 session.

During the last session of the Conference, many member States sent a clear signal about the need to respond to new threats, including cybersecurity, autonomous weapons and the possibility of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists and other non-State entities. We consider it necessary to react to these new developments.

In view of the deteriorating conditions of existing international security systems, we must not steer clear of resolving these accumulated challenges or attempt to address all issues in one fell swoop. We call on States to continue substantive work on the issues on our agenda.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, please allow me first to congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament this year. You may count on my delegation's full support.

May I also use this opportunity to welcome the High Representative for Disarmament and to thank her for her statement this morning. I would also like to congratulate and welcome a number of my colleagues on the assumption of their role in the Conference on Disarmament: the Ambassador of Austria, the Ambassador of Egypt, the Ambassador of Ireland, the Ambassador of Italy, the Ambassador of Mexico and the Ambassador of Peru. The delegation of the Netherlands looks forward to working with them all in this important forum.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the European Union statement and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Mr. President, as we start the new year in the Conference on Disarmament today, let us get back to work. For the single multilateral negotiation forum for disarmament, this means let us start negotiating. In today's world, there is ample reason to pursue disarmament.

In the view of the Netherlands, the Conference on Disarmament, with all its flaws, remains the best vehicle to deal with multilateral disarmament. Nevertheless, we should also be aware that, owing to the Conference's deadlock of over two decades, disarmament is being pursued in other multilateral forums. This should serve as a wake-up call for us all.

We need to adapt our disarmament machinery so that it is fit to deal with today's threats. Some of today's threats are also yesterday's threats and, unfortunately, are no less urgent today. Owing, however, to advancements in science, technological innovations and connectivity, the so-called frontier issues have started to emerge: new, potential security threats arising from a world with its ever developing technology. Accordingly, we need flexibility on, first, the scope of issues that are addressed and, second, what the outcome of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament should be.

Given that there are technological developments with a dual purpose, such as those in cyberspace and outer space, and the impact of artificial intelligence on weapon systems, we should be flexible on considering measures – in the broadest sense of the word – such as developing norms, principles, guidelines or codes of conduct to govern multilateral disarmament and security issues. We further need to broaden the involvement of different stakeholders to adjust to today's world, which means, first, universalization and, second, involving civil society. The Netherlands therefore welcomes the initiatives of the United Nations in that regard.

At a more practical level, the Netherlands saw merit in the substantive discussions that took place in the working group on the way ahead last year, under the able chairship of Ambassador Htin Lynn of Myanmar. The Netherlands would also like to thank the facilitators for their efforts. We are moving closer to agreeing on recommendations on a programme of work. Although these discussions have not as yet led to consensual recommendations, we believe that this initiative was helpful in gaining a better understanding of the various positions of the delegations in building confidence and in identifying low-hanging fruit. We would therefore be keen to build on these substantive discussions when we continue our pursuit of a programme of work.

The need to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work is unfortunately shown by today's biggest proliferation crisis. The nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea threaten not just regional, but also global stability and security. The Netherlands strongly condemns the dangerous provocations by the Republic and has expressed its disapproval in various multilateral forums. In that light, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2397 (2017) and we call on all States to fully implement the restrictive measures applied on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as only scrupulous and worldwide implementation will make the measures work. The Netherlands recently took over the chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and it looks forward to working with all parties towards this end.

In that context, we would like to emphasize that sanctions are not a punitive measure. They are imposed for the purpose of changing the nuclear behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so that it will get back to the negotiating table, as the only road

that can lead us to a lasting solution in the field of diplomacy. Accordingly, we welcome the recent increased contacts between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Returning to our priorities for the Conference on Disarmament, the Netherlands continues to attach great importance to a fissile material cut-off treaty as a crucial step towards disarmament, the negotiation of which should commence without delay. In this regard, we welcome the discussions in 2017 in the working group on the way ahead, which explored the possibilities of pursuing a more flexible mandate on this issue. As we indicated, we look forward to continuing these discussions in order to move forward towards an agreement. To this end, we shall also support the continued work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group this year and we look forward to its final report this summer.

The enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament is another issue that continues to deserve serious consideration. We underline the importance of having consultations on the expansion of the Conference membership and we encourage the appointment of a coordinator who would be specifically mandated to deal with this issue. To conclude, the Netherlands looks forward to working with all delegations in the Conference this year. Let us get back to work.

The President: Thank you Ambassador. I think "Let us get back to work" is a good theme. We should keep plugging it over the course of our presidency and also during the presidencies to follow.

I now invite the representative of Indonesia to take the floor.

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Mr. President, at the outset, we would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the role of the first President of the Conference on Disarmament for the 2018 session. I wish you every success in performing your duties. You may rest assured of my delegation's full support for the success of your tenure. We would also like to welcome the United Nations Under-Secretary General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: her remarks are a true reflection of the important responsibility and challenges that must be addressed by this august body.

Mr. President, allow us also to take the opportunity to welcome the Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Austria, Ireland, Peru, Egypt, Mexico and Italy. We look forward to working with them and their delegations.

We remain of the view that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral forum for the negotiation of disarmament. As we embark on this year's Conference, it is a matter of regret to have to accept that, yet again, we have failed to fulfil the Conference's mandate and that, for more than 20 years, all progress in disarmament has been made outside of this chamber.

Moreover, to date, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as the last substantive outcome of the Conference on Disarmament, has not entered into force, even after the joint statement of the NPT nuclear-weapon States to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Treaty in 2016. Our work this session should focus on breaking the impasse and bringing substantive work back to this Conference. In this regard, Indonesia reiterates its call for the Conference to adopt and implement a programme of work. We need to intensify our efforts to find common grounds and show flexibility.

Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of Indonesia. It is deeply concerned that, in the twenty-first century, nuclear war remains a threat to humankind. We have witnessed a series of policies and reckless actions by nuclear-weapon States which can only lead to proliferation and an arms race and will, beyond reasonable doubt, jeopardize efforts to achieve total global nuclear disarmament.

In the light of the continuing deterioration in the state of nuclear disarmament affairs, Indonesia welcomes General Assembly resolution 72/251 on follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament.

We look forward to participating in the high-level conference to be held in New York from 14 to 16 May 2018 and encourage all States Members of the United Nations and

members of specialized agencies to participate in that event. Indonesia also looks forward to contributing to the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/67. It is our hope that the Group will draw on the verification experience gained and lessons learned from past treaties. We expect that the Group's report will contain practical recommendations conducive to the furthering of nuclear disarmament efforts.

Indonesia was among the strong proponents of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature on 20 September 2017. Consequently, we oppose any activities prohibited under this Treaty, in particular threats to use nuclear weapons, their testing or development, including their modernization, and assistance with nuclear weapons, together with any stationing of these weapons in a State's territory. We call upon other States to support this Treaty and demonstrate their commitment to global peace and stability in pursuit of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. For our part, we will step up our efforts to ensure that the Treaty enters into force at the earliest opportunity, including in cooperation with civil society.

Indonesian support for the new Treaty should not, however, be interpreted as diminishing commitment to and interest in the continued existence and relevance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite the indefinite extension of that Treaty, the grand bargain continues to elude us. As a faithful party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, however, Indonesia continues to play its role with a view to achieving a successful review cycle. Such a commitment was reflected in the convening of the Asia-Pacific regional meeting in Jakarta last year, co-hosted by Indonesia and the Netherlands, as the Chair of the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee. Indonesia will continue its constructive engagement in the process leading up to the second session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, which will be held here in Geneva from 23 April to 4 May 2018.

Indonesia, as a State that has denounced the nuclear-weapon option, is directly threatened by the bleak situation of nuclear disarmament in the world today. We would like to emphasize that our demand for security assurances remains valid and legitimate and we consider the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones to be important in this regard. In view of its economic importance and strategic location, it is vital that the region of South-East Asia should be kept free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty at the earliest opportunity.

We also underscore the significant importance of creating a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and call for the convening of the long-delayed conference on that issue. At the same time, Indonesia believes that, given their limited geographical scope, nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot be sufficient to guarantee security assurances; nor is a political declaration by States that possess nuclear weapons. These cannot be a substitute for universal, legally binding security assurances.

My delegation would like to stress the urgent need for a universal and legally binding instrument to assure States that do not possess nuclear weapons against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. To attain that objective, we wish to reaffirm the urgent need to reach an early agreement on effective international arrangements in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/25.

Where the issue of a fissile material treaty is concerned, Indonesia is committed to promoting a balanced fissile material treaty which addresses the concerns of nuclear-weapon States and also those of non-nuclear-weapon States. Indonesia considers that a future treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices should be legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable. We are of the view that document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remain the most suitable basis on which future negotiations can commence. The document should not however, be interpreted as confining the scope of the treaty to the future production of fissile materials only. Indonesia considers that document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein allow for future negotiations to address all aspects of the treaty, including its eventual scope. Also in that regard, Indonesia looks forward to continuing its participation in the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert

preparatory group pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/259. It is our hope that the group will succeed in creating a useful framework that will serve to expedite the work of negotiations on this treaty when those negotiations do finally take place.

Indonesia is deeply disturbed by developments related to anti-ballistic missile systems and the increased threat of the weaponization and militarization of outer space. Outer space is our common heritage and it must be used in a peaceful manner for the benefit and interest of all humanity. Indonesia supports the negotiation of a treaty to ban an arms race in outer space and encourages interim steps to build trust and transparency. The negotiations should be open, transparent and inclusive of a code of conduct on outer space. Furthermore, they should be consistent with the mandates of all relevant United Nations bodies.

Lastly, Indonesia pledges its full cooperation, wherever possible. Let me reiterate the Indonesian delegation's full support for the early adoption of a programme of work, with a view to moving the Conference forward. It is our genuine hope that members will share this objective and show their utmost flexibility. We would also like to reiterate our support to Sri Lanka and the other member States that will occupy the presidency this session: we wish them every success in that regard.

The President: I thank the representative from Indonesia and I now give the floor to the representative from Chile.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Chile expresses its satisfaction at seeing the representative of Sri Lanka presiding over this first meeting of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We acknowledge the commitment of Sri Lanka to our shared goals and my delegation assures you of its willingness to participate in your work. We appreciate in particular the preparatory work which you have undertaken for this session, including the compilation of all the efforts undertaken to revitalize this body, which can no longer remain at a stalemate and unable to adopt a programme of work. In this context, we share the frustration of many other delegations, but we must not give up on our mission. As you indicated in your opening statement, Mr. President, while we face significant challenges, we do have certain opportunities at our disposal.

As the year begins, we must reflect on the current international situation in the field of disarmament and international security. In that regard, Chile notes with concern the high levels of anxiety surrounding nuclear weapons, as was recently highlighted by the Secretary-General and called to mind this morning by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who gave a detailed account of our main challenges.

Among the positive developments, the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons exemplifies the major achievements that can be made through the joint efforts of like-minded Governments and representatives of civil society, who play an increasingly important role in multilateral processes. Accordingly, we rejoice in the award to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons of the Nobel Peace Prize, well-deserved recognition for this historic milestone.

That said, we are not so naïve as to think that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons puts an end to the threat of nuclear weapons. What it does, however, is enable us to work towards filling the legal vacuum that existed. Now there is an international legal instrument for the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, thus strengthening the stigmatization of nuclear weapons, the possession of which should be not be a source of prestige for any State. We also share the concern expressed by various delegations regarding the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its persistent provocations of the international community. We hope that the recent gestures of rapprochement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea – described this morning by the Ambassador of Brazil as Olympic diplomacy – can foster a climate of dialogue that leads to the détente necessary for a solution to the conflict and leads the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic programmes once and for all, since they are illegal in the light of international law.

It is true that we do not all share the same vision on the specific path that we should tread to achieve nuclear disarmament. The majority of States do, however, share the ultimate goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. For that reason, our differences of approach should not become obstacles to our working together and cooperating in a constructive manner in the promotion of specific measures that enable us to move forward to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, we wish to highlight the efforts undertaken by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative to advocate, among other measures, such specific strategies as providing disarmament education, reducing nuclear weapon alert levels and promoting the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Chile is also part of the new Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification, an initiative championed by Norway that we hope will deliver valuable recommendations. We also take the opportunity to highlight the important work being carried out by Canada in its capacity as Chair of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group.

Chile believes that these specific measures neither replace the urgent need to prohibit nuclear weapons nor alter the work being conducted in the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; rather, these are complementary processes that we will continue to support in a constructive and consistent manner.

With regard to another of the central themes of this Conference, we are concerned at the possible triggering of an arms race in outer space. We welcome the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts to address this issue and hope that it can make real progress so that we may achieve the desired consensus to begin negotiating, in this forum, the appropriate international instruments to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, we reaffirm our support and willingness to arrive at the long-awaited programme of work and we wish you every success in that undertaking. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to our final speaker on the list for today, the representative of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I should like to congratulate you on assuming the first Presidency of the Conference in 2018. I am confident that our work will get off to a fine start this year under your leadership, and I would also like to thank you for (*spoke in English*) saving the best for last.

(*Spoke in Chinese*) Mr. President, China is committed to achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, maintaining peace and stability on that Peninsula and settling the issue through dialogue and consultation. China has also been consistent in its comprehensive, accurate, conscientious and strict implementation of resolutions adopted by the Security Council concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and has duly fulfilled its international obligations.

At present, while the parties in the north and south of the Korean Peninsula are gradually re-establishing dialogue and contact, the situation there remains highly complex and sensitive. All parties should appreciate the current exceptional relaxation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, support the efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to improve their relations, and make greater efforts to ease the situation and promote dialogue. Practical experience proves that blindly applying coercion and isolation can only be counterproductive.

As everyone knows, the so-called "United Nations Command" was a product of the cold war and soon became an anachronism. The use by the United States and Canada of their status as participating countries in that United Nations Command to initiate a foreign ministers' meeting on the Korean nuclear issue clearly reflects a cold war mentality, which can only create discord in the international community and impair joint efforts to promote a proper settlement of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. Convening such meetings without the participation of important parties to the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue cannot promote the proper settlement of that issue. The main channel for handling and resolving the Korean

Peninsula nuclear issue should remain the framework of the Six Party Talks and the United Nations Security Council. That is why the legitimacy and representativeness of that meeting have been widely questioned by the international community from the outset.

The essence of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue is the problem of security. The fundamental policy for a peaceful settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue can only be found through dialogue and addressing the legitimate security concerns of all parties in a balanced manner. That is why China has put forward the "suspension for suspension" proposal and its idea of a "dual track approach". This is the most realistic and reasonable plan under the current situation; it not only helps alleviate tensions on the Korean Peninsula, but also addresses the most urgent security concerns of the parties, provides an opportunity for the resumption of peace talks, and creates conditions for breaking out of the current impasse.

We have always believed that military means should not be an option for resolving the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, because force cannot solve disputes, but only causes greater disasters that are unacceptable for all parties and would constitute even worse misfortune for countries in the region. It is our hope that all parties concerned will work together to play a constructive role in promoting the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and peacefully settling the nuclear issue there.

The international community universally supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concerning the Iranian nuclear issue and fully recognizes the efforts of Iran to implement that agreement. China has been consistent in its firm support of the Plan of Action; we believe that the agreement is an important outcome of multilateralism and a model for settling international hot spot issues through political and diplomatic means. Ensuring the thorough implementation of the Plan of Action is of great significance for upholding peace and stability in the Middle East region and the international nuclear non proliferation regime, and serves the fundamental interests of all parties concerned.

As agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was not easily achieved, all parties concerned should value it highly. Under the current circumstances, we hope that all the parties, by proceeding from the big picture and long term perspectives and mustering firm political will, can properly manage disputes and continue implementing the Plan of Action in a comprehensive and effective manner. I should also like to stress that China consistently opposes unilateral sanctions imposed on certain countries by other countries based on their own domestic laws; this position is consistent and clear cut.

While I do not wish to dwell at length today on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to emphasize that a fissile material cut-off treaty is only an issue for certain countries. The issue is also outdated and of very limited meaning and value. We are of the view that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the new challenges raised by technological development, including (*spoke in English*) cyber weapons, autonomous weapons, et cetera (*spoke in Chinese*) are vastly more important and urgent than a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Lastly, I would like to say that, (*spoke in English*) under the glorious leadership of the world champion of scrapping international agreements, even if the Conference did start and conclude negotiations on any international agreements or treaties, these could be abandoned at any time. Under the leadership of this champion, from the Far East to the Near East or from East Asia to West Asia, no matter how many new geographical names we come up with, this world can only become more and more chaotic. In the Indo-Pacific region, we are of the view that the entry into force of the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the South-East Asian region is of great importance, and China is always ready for this, which poses no difficulty for us, and we hope other nuclear weapon States will follow suit.

(*Spoke in Chinese*) Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now come to the rights of reply. No other States have requested the floor under the general debate, but there are two requests under the right of reply, from the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply, to respond to the comments just made by my Chinese colleague, whom I have missed. I have not seen him for a while and I have missed his statements, as, I am sure, many have.

Allow me to make a few points about the Vancouver meeting that was co-hosted by Canada and the United States. The invitation list for the Vancouver meeting was based on the United Nations Command – to which, I believe, my Chinese colleague alluded – sending States, of which neither Russia or China is part. The meeting focused on measures to advance our pressure campaign and to bring the Democratic People's Republic of Korea back to the negotiation table. We are in the process of briefing both Russia and China on the outcomes of that meeting. The meeting was convened to find ways to advance the pressure campaign against North Korea and to send North Korea a unified message from the international community that we will not accept it as a nuclear armed power and that the international community shares the goal of the full, complete and irreversible, verifiable denuclearization of North Korea.

Participants at the ministerial meeting recognized the importance and special responsibility of China and Russia in contributing to a long-term solution to the problems on the Korean Peninsula. They embraced the steps by China and Russia to comply with United Nations sanctions and called on all States to fully implement and enforce these measures. Finally, the United States will continue to work closely with China and with Russia on issues related to North Korea.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States and now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I believe that, at our meeting this morning, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made himself very clear about the position of our Government, so I do not want to reiterate those positions again here; but since some countries made reference to the self-defensive deterrent of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in their statements, I would like briefly to respond to them.

It is not very surprising to hear the repeated and stereotyped accusations levelled against my country by some members of the Conference on Disarmament, which only demonstrate that these countries are blindly following the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The lengthy charges made by the representative of the United Kingdom are a typical example. My delegation cannot understand what these countries intend, by raising the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for discussion while turning a blind eye to the recent military build-up around the Korean Peninsula by the United States and its plan to modernize its nuclear arsenal, a plan that was revealed in the leaked draft of the Nuclear Posture Review that will be published soon. Perhaps I should remind these countries that the nuclear force of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is there to protect its sovereignty and deter any military provocations or reckless war by the United States.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not use nuclear weapons unless hostile forces violate its sovereignty and security interests; nor will it threaten any other country or region with its nuclear weapons. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never place its self-defensive nuclear deterrent on the negotiating table unless the United States abandons its hostile policy and completely removes the nuclear threat against my country.

The representative of China mentioned the meeting of foreign ministers in Canada on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We see that this is a very dangerous attempt to revive the confrontation of the cold war era and it may drive the situation on the Korean Peninsula once again towards acute tension.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement, under his right of reply.

The representative of China now has the right of reply.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, China did not participate in the Vancouver meeting and we have no appetite for that at all. In response to what has been said by Ambassador Wood, I would just like to say that the Indo-Pacific region is entirely omnipotent and the United States may not need the help of China at all.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement and I recognize the Russian Federation. The representative of the Russian Federation has the floor.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I did not intend to make a statement today and am therefore exercising the right of reply in connection with the attacks on the Russian Federation that have been voiced here today. I wish to state for the record that the Russian Federation fully and conscientiously fulfils its obligations arising from relevant international agreements and Security Council resolutions. I ask that all other assertions, which are not based on fact, be considered unfounded and unrelated to the truth.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. Before we close the meeting and look towards the next period, does the Secretary wish to make any announcements?

Ms. Mercogliano (Acting Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you Mr. President. This is just a reminder to member and non-member States to submit a note verbale or a letter with an indication of the composition of their delegation. It would be greatly appreciated if this could be done this week because it will enable us to process the information document with all the delegations participating in the Conference by the end of this month.

The President: Thank you very much. Before we conclude, there are two matters I want to share with you. First I want to draw the attention of members to the joint letters sent by the President and the Secretary-General of the Conference on 18 January inviting delegations to consider the possibility of addressing the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament at the ministerial level. The high-level political engagement of your Government is important for taking forward multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. While our invitation is extended for the entire 2018 session to the Conference, we encourage States to avail themselves also of the opportunities provided by the attendance of their ministers at other high-level events held in Geneva for them also to address the Conference at the convenience of delegations. The soonest such opportunity will be during the high-level segment of the Human Rights Council, which will take place in the week of 26 February 2018. That is the first point I want to make.

The second is that, while I thank all delegations who have expressed support for the presidency and some who have also had encouraging words and readiness to help the President as we proceed – some noted also the compilation that we circulated on Friday with a view to next week's discussion on the programme of work – I wish to recall that the paper circulated by the secretariat was for the purpose of facilitating these discussions. Some have raised this question and I have explained why Sri Lanka undertook this exercise and I think it is for two reasons.

First, as much as we talk about 22 years of deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, it is not as if we have done nothing. We have been working; it is only that it has not succeeded. I hope that this compilation will be a tribute to those efforts made to try to work and that, seeing all this gathered on one piece of paper, agenda item after agenda item, will remind us – and also inspire us – not just to hang on to those proposals, some of which were made in packages. Second, we also need to think outside the box and consider how we can innovate and find new packages and programmes which take into account the changed context and environment. This, in my view, is the intention with which this compilation has been circulated. It is not a proposal, it is a paper that provides food for thought and which I commend to you for consideration. I trust that you will take it in that spirit and that when we meet next week, we will have a good comprehensive discussion on it.

I also have been informed by several delegations of a conflict, as some of the delegations' ambassadors are in Davos already and will also be there on Thursday. In that

context I have decided that we will not hold the plenary meeting on Thursday. We will hold our next meeting on the following Tuesday, so that some of those who have not been able to make statements can do that when we start. Then we could go on to have the discussion on the programme of work as an informal discussion to start with and, if necessary, move into a more formal phase as things proceed. We are open-minded about it and let us see how it goes; I appreciate the spirit in which today's discussions have taken place. I am told that, compared to first days at other sessions, our discussion today has been long, but I hope that that spirit will continue throughout this presidency and also during those to follow this year, so that the Conference on Disarmament will live up to the aspirations and come out with something tangible.

With that, I bring this meeting to a close and I wish you a good week and look forward to seeing you again next Tuesday.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.